

Yosemite West Property & Homeowners, Inc.

Yosemite West Defensible Space Project Overview

Dear Neighbors,

YWPHI has been awarded a \$75,655 National Fire Plan grant from the U.S.D.A. Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council (see <http://www.yosemitewest.org/grants.htm>). National Fire Plan grants assist “Communities at Risk” with fuel reduction, and Yosemite West is identified as a “Community at Risk” from wildfire (see <http://www.yosemitewest.org/fatrisk.htm>). Implementation of the National Fire Plan and recent catastrophic wildfires in California have made substantial federal funding available. YWPHI is proud to assist landowners who want to reduce the risk of wildland fire.

The purpose of the grant is to create defensible space in accordance with California law and the guidelines in PRC§4291 on 30% of the parcels (or approximately 90 of the 293 parcels in Yosemite West) or on 36 of the 109 acres in Yosemite West. The project is described in Appendix H - Project Summary #1 of the *Yosemite West Community Wildfire Protection Plan* (CWPP), approved by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors in June 2008. The project area is identified as YW-006 on the Phase I Projects/Parcels Map, also in Appendix H. The approved CWPP was mailed on CD to all property owners of record in Yosemite West in August 2008. You can also download the CWPP at <http://www.yosemitewest.org/ywcpwp.pdf>.

Defensible space is the area within the perimeter of a parcel, development, neighborhood or community where basic wildland fire prevention practices and measures are implemented, providing the key point of defense from a wildland fire or an escaping structural fire. The perimeter is the area of a parcel or development excluding physical structures. Properly maintained emergency vehicle access, emergency water reserves, street signs, building identification, and fuel reduction are the essential defensible space characteristics of a perimeter area.

Creating and maintaining defensible space is just one step in mitigating wildland fire losses. The primary concept is built-in fire prevention. Each home built in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) must have a basic level of self-protection, including water, adequate roads, flammable vegetation clearance and proper building identification. Each landowner must accept responsibility for incorporating basic perimeter fire prevention measures into the design and construction of wildland structures. This incorporation of defensible space provides a margin of safety for wildland and structural firefighters, provides a point of attack or defense, and increases the survivability of the home. Take the **YOSEMITE WEST DEFENSIBLE SPACE REALITY CHECK** (see insert) to better understand the facts about defensible space.

The Advantages

Participating in the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project and working collaboratively with YWPHI gives landowners several important advantages.

- YWPHI has written and submitted grant applications and secured more than \$131,000 funding for this fuel reduction project and other fire safety projects that benefit all of Yosemite West.
- In California, the agencies that provide grants for fuel reduction projects only work with established nonprofit organizations (such as YWPHI), fire safe councils, and other government or non-government entities. These grants are *not* available to individuals.
- The grant-funded project minimizes the financial and physical burden to the landowner in complying with the California's 100-foot defensible space law.
- The project realizes substantial cost savings associated with economies of scale. It is more cost effective to perform fuel reduction on multiple acres owned by several landowners than to have landowners working independently.
- YWPHI represents the community through ongoing cooperation and collaboration with all of the agencies involved in implementing the National Fire Plan.
- The project liaises fire science specialists, foresters, and other specialists with professional expertise.
- YWPHI works with the donor, agencies and contractors on landowners' behalf.

The Goals

- The project improves community-wide defensible space by reducing surface, ladder and aerial fuels to create a fire-resilient forest to protect life, property and natural resources. The goal is not to increase property values, although that might be a result. Nor is the goal to "clear-cut" the forest or to harvest timber for commercial purposes or for improved forest health, although a healthier forest is a potential outcome.
- The project provides technical and cost-share assistance to landowners for fuel reduction to lessen the threat of wildland fire to their homes and the community.
- The project helps homeowners create a minimum of 100-foot defensible space in compliance with PRC§4291. A goal for built parcels is to see at least 44 houses (or 50% of the 88 houses) improve their Hazard Value from the undesirable and dangerous Red Zone and Orange Zone (using the 2008 Red Zone Fire Risk Assessment conducted by the Mariposa County Fire

Department) into the Yellow Zone. Currently only 24% of the houses in Yosemite West are in the Yellow Zone. The project increases that percentage to at least 62%. (Refer to <http://www.yosemitewest.org/mcfdgis.htm> for further information.)

- The goal for unbuilt parcels is to remove all ladder fuels and trees less than 6 inches diameter at breast height (dbh), in effect creating a shaded fuel break. The project treats vacant lots with heavy buildup of small cedars and firs, manzanita, and dead trees. Unbuilt lots on the perimeter of the community are especially important and are given priority, because they link up with the existing shaded fuel breaks adjacent to the community and would substantially enhance defensible space for Yosemite West.
- Most landowners want to address the fire hazard, but may have differing ideas on how to address the problem. No two landowners likely have the same vision about how hazardous fuel reduction should be implemented in their community. The project endeavors to understand and thoroughly address landowners' concerns by applying the best fire science available.

The Process

→ Step 1 - *Information*

Please read the materials in this information packet, which is being mailed to every property owner of record at the address listed by the Mariposa County Assessor's office as of April 1, 2009.

→ Step 2 - *Volunteer*

We are asking for volunteers to become "block captains," who are willing to contact neighbors to enlist participation. Start talking to your neighbors to generate participation in your community fuel reduction project.

→ Step 3 - *Questions & Answers*

Attend the upcoming community planning meetings to ask any questions you may have:

Wednesday, May 13, 7-8 p.m. - and - Saturday, May 16, 5-6 p.m.

Both meetings will cover the same material; you are welcome to attend either or both meetings. If you can't come in person, you can participate via conference call. To attend by phone, please dial ☎ 800-786-1922 a few minutes before the designated time, and enter participant number 66638246#.

→ Step 4 - *Formalities*

Please complete and submit the following two documents by July 1, 2009:

(a) The **Letter of Commitment** (<http://www.yosemitewest.org/grants.htm#loc.pdf>) is the legal document that addresses issues related to expectations, responsibilities and liabilities. The Letter of Commitment is with YWPHI which is implementing the project.

(b) The project requires that landowners make a match or **In-Kind Contribution** (<http://www.yosemitewest.org/grants.htm#ikc.pdf>) of a minimum of \$160 per parcel (it can be made by volunteer labor or in actual dollars) towards the project's total cost.

→ Step 5 - Compliance

YWPHI is currently waiting for approval of the required environmental and cultural compliance for the California Environmental Quality Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and National Historic Preservation Act, which protect threatened and endangered wildlife and sensitive plants, soil and water quality, and archaeologically significant sites. All compliance work has been done, and approval is expected shortly.

→ Step 6 - Start Date

Once the compliance documentation has been approved, the California Fire Safe Council will transfer funds to the project's fiscal sponsor and give approval for work on the ground to start. We do not know exactly when this will occur, but anticipate it will be by late June 2009. Please visit <http://www.yosemitewest.org/grants.htm> for updates.

→ Step 7 - Scheduling

Participating landowners who have signed up to participate by returning the Letter of Commitment and In-Kind Contribution form by July 1, 2009 will be contacted by email and/or telephone to be informed of the scheduling. If you want to be present on your property when the work is done, this will give you time to arrange to be there when the contractor comes.

→ Step 8 - Completion

Fuel reduction starts and continues through Summer 2009 with successful completion expected by Fall 2009. Digital photography for each parcel will be used to document the property before work starts and to show improvement after work ends. The contractor will provide a three- or four-person hand crew using chainsaws, pole saws, loppers, and a chipper.

→ Step 9 - Outcome

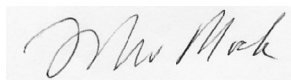
The Red Zone Fire Risk Assessment will be updated in Fall 2009 to measure improvement.

→ Step 10 - Maintenance

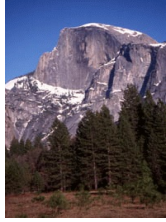
The forest will grow back unless you maintain your defensible space. This can become part of your annual spring routine. The work will be easier, because this initial treatment will leave you with more defensible space.

Thank you for your interest in collaborating with your neighbors to address the hazardous fuels that pose a risk to your safety, your home and the environment.

Sincerely,
John Mock, Ph.D.
Chair, YWPHI Fire Safety Committee



firesafety@yosemitewest.org



Yosemite West Property & Homeowners, Inc.

Letter of Commitment for Participation in the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project

I/we _____
Print your name(s) above

(hereinafter called "Landowner") give my/our commitment to participate in the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project. Landowner agrees to participate freely in the project. Landowner agrees and consents to fuel reduction work being undertaken on Landowner's property.

Landowner agrees to defend, indemnify and hold harmless Yosemite West Property & Homeowners, Inc. (YWPHI) and Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council, and the officers, directors, agents, employees, members, and participants in both YWPHI and the Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council (collectively, the "Indemnitees") from and against any and all liability of any type, including but not limited to, all claims, demands, costs, expenses, obligations, liabilities, judgments, losses, damages, recoveries, and deficiencies, including interest, penalties, and reasonable attorney fees and costs arising from any acts, errors, or omissions of any of the Indemnitees in the performance of or in connections with or related to the fuel reduction services or other services of any type under the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project. The foregoing obligations of the Landowner are expressly intended to extend to and encompass liability arising from the sole and/or active negligence of any of the Indemnitees.

Landowner agrees that YWPHI is not obligated to provide services under the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project, and is not liable in the event that it does not provide services for any reason, or for the negligent or incomplete performance of services, under the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project.

The funds for the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project are limited and YWPHI may refuse or be unable to provide service to anyone. Participation in this project is limited to two parcels (defined by the APN) per Landowner as recorded on the Mariposa County Assessor's records as of April 1, 2009. Landowner agrees to complete and sign *one* Letter of Commitment per parcel, and return it to YWPHI no later than July 1, 2009.

This Letter of Commitment can be amended only by prior written notification of either party executing this Letter of Commitment.

Yosemite West Property & Homeowners, Inc.

7585 Henness Ridge Road, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389

www.YosemiteWest.org

Landowner agrees to participate in the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project in each of the following ways (please initial each item):	Your Initials
<p>A. Landowner agrees to allow fuel reduction services to take place on Landowner's property. Landowner is the legal owner of the property where services will be performed. Landowner hereby agrees and consents to YWPHI and the contractor(s) designated by YWPHI under the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project entering Landowner's property for purposes of arranging for the performance of the below indicated services in connection with this project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove ladder fuels (fuels that provide vertical continuity between strata, thereby allowing fire to carry from surface fuels into the crowns of trees or shrubs with relative ease). 2. Remove coniferous trees less than 6 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh) measured 5 feet from base, except hardwood trees (dogwood, oak, big-leaf maple, willow, alder). 3. Create horizontal spacing between shrubs, and horizontal and vertical spacing between shrubs and trees. The amount of space will depend on the steepness of the slope and size of the shrubs and trees. 4. Reduce shrubs and trees near driveways and parking areas to provide 6 feet horizontal and 15 feet vertical clearance. 5. Chip debris generated from these fuel reduction services and blow chips back onto the property. Landowner agrees to comply with YWPHI and the contractor's decision on where chips are deposited. <p>Landowner agrees to flag any ladder fuels, coniferous trees less than 6" dbh, or shrubs, using flagging tape, that Landowner does <i>not</i> want removed no later than July 1, 2009. The contractor(s) will <i>not</i> remove any single specimens of trees, ornamental shrubbery, plants used as ground cover, deciduous trees, or any trees larger than 6" dbh unless they act as a ladder fuel. The contractor(s) will remove limbs through the use of pole saws and is <i>not</i> responsible for removing any limbs that the contractor(s) cannot reach through the use of pole saws.</p>	
<p>Landowner agrees that scheduling will be determined by YWPHI and the contractor(s) and that Landowner may <i>not</i> be able to arrange for fuel reduction services on a specific date and time.</p> <p>Please ✓check one of the following: Landowner gives permission for these fuel reduction services to take place: <input type="checkbox"/> without Landowner's presence. <input type="checkbox"/> only with Landowner's presence. Landowner agrees to be present at the date determined by YWPHI and the contractor(s).</p>	

Landowner agrees to participate in the Yosemite West Defensible Space Project in each of the following ways (please initial each item):		Your Initials	
B.	Landowner agrees to make a \$160 In-Kind Contribution (i.e., a minimum of \$160 match of time and/or money) no later than July 1, 2009 by any of or any combination of the three following options.		
	In-Kind Contribution Options	Total	
	Option #1: Landowner will volunteer time to conduct fuel reduction work on Landowner's property to be valued at the non-negotiable rate of \$16 per hour and will complete and submit one <i>In-Kind Contribution</i> form per parcel to YWPHI. (For example, you can satisfy the In-Kind Contribution when you spend 10 hours raking and removing pine needles from your property.) Estimate number of hours: _____	\$	
	Option #2: Landowner will provide photocopies of receipts to YWPHI for out-of-pocket expenses Landowner incurred for hiring independent labor to conduct fuel reduction services on Landowner's property.	\$	
	Option #3: Landowner will provide a cash match. Write a check payable to the project's fiscal sponsor, the Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council, and mail the check to YWPHI.	\$	
	Total In-Kind Contribution (minimum of \$160):	\$	
C.	Please <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> check one of the following: <input type="checkbox"/> If Landowner owns a house, Landowner agrees to accept the 2008 Red Zone Fire Risk Assessment report prepared (for each parcel with a structure) by the Mariposa County Fire Department and mailed to Landowner in November 2008 as a defensible space evaluation of their property. <input type="checkbox"/> If Landowner owns a vacant lot, Landowner agrees to accept an on-site fuel reduction evaluation conducted by the contractor(s) designated by YWPHI who are experienced and knowledgeable about defensible space.		
D.	Landowner agrees to support YWPHI and acknowledge its efforts to obtain the grant funding this project by joining YWPHI and paying its \$25 annual membership dues for the current membership year (9/1/08 to 8/31/09). Dues are not prorated for any portion of the membership year. Please <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> check one of the following: <input type="checkbox"/> Landowner is a YWPHI member and has already paid dues for the current year. <input type="checkbox"/> Landowner is not yet a YWPHI member and agrees to complete the enclosed <i>Membership</i> form and mail it with \$25 dues check payable to YWPHI or send dues payment via PayPal to treasurer@yosemitewest.org.		

Local Street Address:

Please ✓ check one:

☐ House

☐ Vacant Lot # _____

Mailing Address
(if different):

Telephone:

Local: (209) 372- _____

Other: _____

Email:

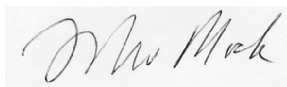
Landowner has read this Letter of Commitment, understands its terms, and has voluntarily entered into these agreements.

Landowner Name(s):

Landowner Signature(s):

Today's Date:

YWPHI Representative's Signature:



John Mock, Ph.D.

Chair, YWPHI Fire Safety Committee

On behalf of the Yosemite West Property & Homeowners Inc., we thank you for your participation in helping to create community-wide defensible space in Yosemite West.

Optional

Yes, I/we will assist in educational efforts to teach my/our neighbors and other community members about the benefits of hazardous fuel reduction work on our properties. I/we are willing to contact neighbors to enlist their participation in this project.

Please ✓ check one of the following:

☐ Yes

Your initials: _____

☐ No



Yosemite West Property &
Homeowners, Inc.
www.YosemiteWest.org

In-Kind Contribution

2009 Yosemite West Defensible Space Project

The hours of volunteer labor that you put in each year for fire safety activities on your property have a dollar value. That value, along with your out-of-pocket expenses, is a measure of our community contribution, called an In-Kind Contribution, that is used to satisfy the community match on our 2009 National Fire Plan grant from the USDA Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council. Participating Landowner agrees to make a minimum match of \$160 by any of or any combination of the three options described below.

Landowner Name(s): _____

Local Address (☒ House or ☐ Vacant Lot): _____

Mailing Address (if different): _____

Describe how you are satisfying your In-Kind Contribution for 2009 fuel reduction services that improve community-wide defensible space.	# Hours worked	Amount
Option #1: Landowner volunteered time to conduct fuel reduction work on Landowner's property valued at a non-negotiable rate of \$16 per hour.		
Brushing the forest floor - raking pine needles, picking up pine cones, removing dead/downed wood, increasing space between shrubs		\$
Thinning the forest - removing dead trees, reducing ladder fuels, increasing space between trees		\$
Improving access to your property - reducing vegetation/trees near driveway and/or parking areas		\$
Debris removal - hauling to the community burn pile, burning on your property, piling for curbside chipping		\$
Subtotal Option #1:		\$
Option #2: Landowner is providing photocopies of receipts (please attach receipts to this form) for out-of-pocket expenses Landowner incurred for hiring independent labor to conduct fuel reduction services on Landowner's property.		
Briefly describe services:		\$
Subtotal Option #2:		\$
Option #3: Landowner is providing a cash match. Write a check payable to the project's fiscal sponsor, the Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council (please enclose check with this form).		
Write dollar amount of your check.	Subtotal Option #3:	\$
Total In-Kind Contribution (minimum of \$160):		\$

Please complete and submit one *In-Kind Contribution* form per parcel (per APN) by July 1, 2009 to YWPHI, 7585 Henness Ridge Road, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389-9108.

Email any questions to firesafety@yosemitewest.org.

Take the YOSEMITE WEST DEFENSIBLE SPACE REALITY CHECK.
Dispel any myths you may have.

YOSEMITE WEST DEFENSIBLE SPACE REALITY CHECK		
Your Excuse?	Myths About Defensible Space	Facts About Defensible Space
MOTIVATE YOURSELF:		
Unaware	"I didn't know there was a wildfire threat to my neighborhood."	Cal Fire classifies Yosemite West in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Yosemite and the Central Sierra have a severe drought condition for the third consecutive year, which dramatically increases the risk from wildland fire.
Denial	"It won't happen to me. I don't believe it."	Every property owner is at risk. The threat of wildland fire is real, likely and not exaggerated. In 2008, the Telegraph Fire burned 55 square miles and was roaring towards Yosemite West at 30 miles per hour.
Fatalism	"It's all fate. When your number is up, it's up."	Whether your house burns or not is not a matter of luck.
Futility	"It won't make a difference."	Research proves that creating defensible space increases the likelihood of a house surviving a wildland fire or being destroyed. Many property owners have gotten the message, but many have either not acted on it or are slow to adopt defensible space practices. Having defensible space promotes firefighter and public safety.
Irresponsibility	"It's not my job."	It is <i>your</i> responsibility to protect your home, not that of the fire department. Public officials are not solely responsible for minimizing wildfire threat.
No Incentives	"If it was really important, my insurance company would give me a break on my premium."	The costs of implementing defensible space is not offset by lower insurance rates. State law allows insurance carriers to require more restrictive defensible space criteria than the criteria in PRC§4291. Many of your neighbors' homeowners' insurance policies have been canceled in recent years.
Insurance	"So what, my insurance carrier will build me a new and better house. I don't care if the house burns down."	Your house may not be adequately insured with new construction costs starting at more than \$300/sq.ft. Why find secure places for your valuables like pictures and things that can't be replaced, and ignore the house. Your burning property may pose a threat to your neighbor who may care more about their house.

YOSEMITE WEST DEFENSIBLE SPACE REALITY CHECK		
Your Excuse?	Myths About Defensible Space	Facts About Defensible Space
Unnatural	"It's wrong to cut trees."	You can selectively remove specific trees and native vegetation while retaining the naturalness and wildland look of the landscape, minimizing disturbance to the natural setting, enhancing wildlife habitat, and promoting a more healthy forest. The current forest has up to 1,000 tree stems per acre, yet should only have about 50 large trees per acre. This unnatural density has made the forest more susceptible to disease.
Aesthetics	"It won't look good."	Effective defensible space results in an attractive landscape that compliments your home, and contributes to your property value.
Discomfort	"I don't want to because of scorpions, lizards, snakes."	Working outdoors in a wildland setting is not hazardous. If you're concerned about risks, ask for help.
TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY:		
Illegal	"It's against the law."	No federal laws or local ordinances prevent the creation of defensible space. In fact, California state law requires 100-foot defensible space; visit Cal Fire's website at http://www.fire.ca.gov . Some insurance carriers require more than 100 feet.
Lack of Ownership	"The problem is on my neighbor's property."	The presence of hazardous fuels on a vacant lot poses a serious threat to adjacent property owners' houses. A homeowner cannot create effective defensible space without the cooperation of their adjacent neighbors. Everyone must act now to help build community-wide defensible space in Yosemite West. Inaction is irresponsible. Please cooperate with a neighbor who is willing to help you work on your property.
HERE'S HOW:		
Lack of Knowledge	"I don't know what to do. I don't want to learn new things about landscaping."	You can easily learn about wildfire threat reduction practices by visiting Cal Fire's website at http://www.fire.ca.gov and also visiting the YWPHI website at http://www.yosemitewest.org/firesafe.htm .
Cost	"I don't have the time or money to do it."	The benefits of reduced fire threat outweigh the monetary expense, volunteer labor, and time requirements. In 2009, YWPHI has been awarded a National Fire Plan grant from the USDA Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council that funds the YOSEMITE WEST DEFENSIBLE SPACE PROJECT . Everyone can participate in the project.
Disposal	"I don't have an easy way to get rid of that stuff."	Participate in the YOSEMITE WEST DEFENSIBLE SPACE PROJECT and the debris generated from hazard fuel reduction services will be chipped.

100' DEFENSIBLE SPACE Make Your Home FIRE SAFE

Why 100 Feet?

Following these simple steps can dramatically increase the chance of your home surviving a wildfire!

A **Defensible Space** of 100 feet around your home is required by law.¹ The goal is to protect your home while providing a safe area for firefighters.

1 "Lean, Clean and Green Zone."

– Clearing an area of 30 feet immediately surrounding your home is critical. This area requires the greatest reduction in flammable vegetation.

2 "Reduced Fuel Zone."

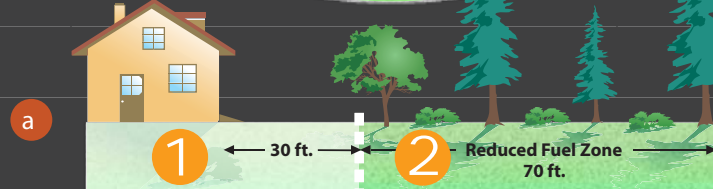
– The fuel reduction zone in the remaining 70 feet (or to property line) will depend on the steepness of your property and the vegetation.

Spacing between plants improves the chance of stopping a wildfire before it destroys your home. You have two options in this area:

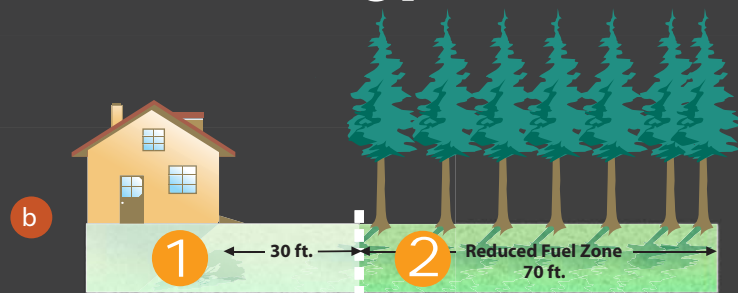
- a Create horizontal and vertical spacing between plants. The amount of space will depend on how steep the slope is and the size of the plants.
- b Large trees do not have to be cut and removed as long as all of the plants beneath them are removed. This eliminates a vertical "fire ladder."

When clearing vegetation, use care when operating equipment such as lawnmowers. One small spark may start a fire; a string trimmer is much safer.

Remove all build-up of needles and leaves from your roof and gutters. Keep tree limbs trimmed at least 10 feet from any chimneys and remove dead limbs that hang over your home or garage. The law also requires a screen over your chimney outlet of not more than ½ inch mesh.



or



Contact your local CAL FIRE office, fire department, or Fire Safe Council for tips and assistance.

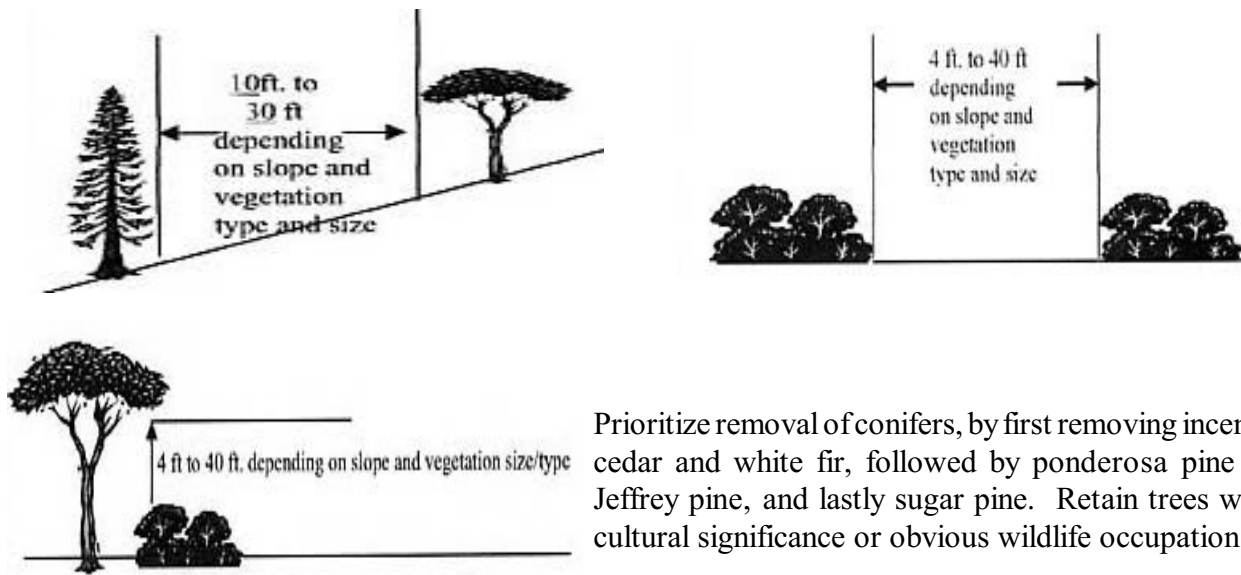
www.fire.ca.gov

1. These regulations affect most of the grass, brush, and timber-covered private lands in the State. Some fire department jurisdictions may have additional requirements. Some activities may require permits for tree removal. Also, some activities may require special procedures for, 1) threatened and endangered species, 2) avoiding erosion, and 3) protection of water quality. Check with local officials if in doubt. Current regulations allow an insurance company to require additional clearance. The area to be treated does not extend beyond your property. The State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection has approved Guidelines to assist you in complying with the new law. Contact your local CAL FIRE office for more details.



Reduced Fuel Zone 30ft-100ft Option (a) - Defensible Space with Fuel Separation

Horizontal Clearance Requirements		
Slope	Trees	Shrubs
0-20%	10ft	2x height of shrub, eg, 3ft shrub x 2 = 6ft space
20-40%	20ft	4x height of shrub
> 40%	30ft	6x height of shrub
Vertical Clearance Requirements		
all %	Minimum vertical space between the top of a shrub and the bottom of the lowest tree limbs is 3x the height of the shrub (eg, 3ft shrub = 9ft vertical space between the top of the shrub and the lowest tree limbs).	

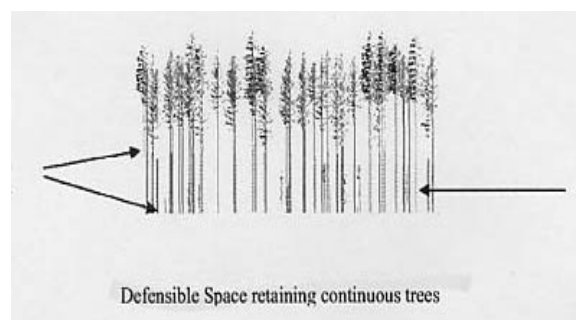


Prioritize removal of conifers, by first removing incense cedar and white fir, followed by ponderosa pine or Jeffrey pine, and lastly sugar pine. Retain trees with cultural significance or obvious wildlife occupation.

Reduced Fuel Zone 30ft-100ft Option (b) - Defensible Space with Continuous Canopy

Retain a continuous stand of larger trees with little or no horizontal spacing between aerial fuels or canopies while creating defensible space.

- Create vertical spacing by removing all surface and ladder fuels greater than 4 inches in height.
- Remove lower limbs of trees to at least 15 feet above ground, higher on steeper slopes.



CAL FIRE marks Wildfire Awareness

Fires occur throughout the state on a daily basis during fire season. To encourage Californians to prepare for this year's fire season, Governor Schwarzenegger has proclaimed May 3-9, Wildfire Awareness Week 2009. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and the California Fire Safe Council are working together throughout the week to educate Californians on the importance of taking fire safety measures now.

Since fire is a natural and inevitable part of California's environment, living here means learning to live with fire. CAL FIRE and local Fire Safe Councils throughout the state are calling upon Californians to give their homes and property a fighting chance against wildfire this season. Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit Chief Dale Hutchinson is urging all residents who live in the state responsibility area of Madera, Mariposa or Merced counties to take measures now that will give firefighters a safe area to battle threatening flames.

Homeowners provide the defense, and CAL FIRE provides the offense. One-hun-

dred feet of defensible space is the owner's responsibility. This theme is meant to make homeowners realize that the actions they take now could be the ones that stop a fire in its tracks. If neighbors take those same steps, disaster could be avoided.

The single most important step is to provide clearance of all dry grass, brush and dead leaves at least 100 feet around all structures on the property. Incorporating fire safe landscaping into this "defensible space," and throughout the property, can be beautiful and functional.

Fire safe landscaping means strategically spacing fire resistant, drought tolerant plants around the perimeter of one's home and property. A local nursery is an excellent source for information about the types of these plants that grow well in the area. A bonus with fire resistant, drought tolerant landscaping is that it requires less water.

A complete homeowner checklist and additional fire preparedness information is available on the CAL FIRE Web site at www.fire.ca.gov and the Fire Safe Council Web site at www.firesafecouncil.org